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This report provides a summary and statistical analysis of the deaths that were investigated by the Mesa County Coroner's Office in the year 2019. Mesa County encompasses an area over 3300 square miles, which consists of desert, agricultural, and mountain areas. Mesa County is home to approximately 154,210 people in 12 communities per the United States Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/mesacountycolorado>). The largest of these is Grand Junction, followed by Fruita and Palisade. Other towns and unincorporated areas of the County include Clifton, Fruitvale, De Beque, Collbran, Mesa, Mack, Loma, Gateway, Glade Park, and Whitewater.

The Coroner and/or Deputy Coroner are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Coroner's mission is to satisfy the legal requirements of the office in an expeditious manner. The primary task of the Coroner's Office is to determine the cause and manner of death of those who have died in Mesa County or in those whose traumatic event originated in Mesa County. An autopsy may be required depending upon the circumstances of the death. Not all deaths that the Coroner's Office investigates requires a full autopsy.

The Coroner's Office investigates sudden, unexpected deaths, especially those that occur under violent or suspicious circumstances. The deaths to be reported to the Mesa County Coroner's Office include all deaths occurring in Mesa County as outlined below regardless of where or when the initial injuring event occurred. In addition, all deaths in which the initiating injuring event occurred in Mesa County shall be reported to Mesa County Coroner's Office.

The deaths to be reported to Mesa County Coroner's Office are as follows:

- From disease which may be hazardous, contagious, or may constitute a threat to the health of the general public
- From external violence, an unexplained cause, or under suspicious circumstances
- Where no physician is in attendance, or where, though in attendance, the physician is unable to certify the cause of death
- From thermal, chemical, or radiation injury
- From criminal abortion
- While in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- When the death was sudden and happened to a person who was in good health
- From an industrial accident or any death suspected to involved with the decedent's occupation
- When death occurs in a hospital less than 24 hours after admission to a hospital or after any invasive procedure
- Any death suspected to be due to alcohol intoxication or the result of exposure to drugs or toxic agents
- Any death due to neglect or suspected neglect
- Any stillbirth of 20 or more weeks gestational age unattended by a physician
- Any maternal death to include death of a pregnant woman regardless of the length of the pregnancy, and up to six weeks (or one year) post-delivery, even where the cause of death is unrelated to the pregnancy

- Any death of an infant or child where the medical history has not established a significant pre-existing condition

Staff for 2019

Victor Yahn, F-ABMDI	Coroner
Chuck Nelson, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Nina Strayhorn, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Morgan Hart	Deputy Coroner
Stacie Dix	Deputy Coroner

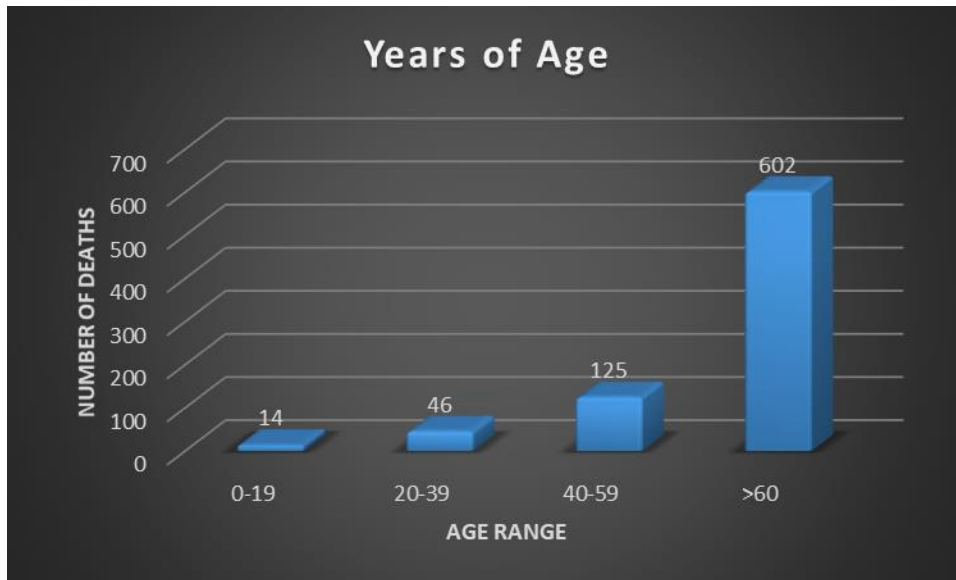
General Statistics (Including deaths transferred to the county of origin)

Mesa County population in July 2019 per census data	154,210
Total Mesa County deaths	2187
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2019	1.42%
Number of deaths investigated	787
Scene Investigations	362
- Victor Yahn	44
- Chuck Nelson	33
- Nina Strayhorn	115
- Morgan Hart	108
- Stacie Dix	62
Facility Investigations	425
- Victor Yahn	61
- Chuck Nelson	46
- Nina Strayhorn	135
- Morgan Hart	100
- Stacie Dix	83
Percentage of total deaths investigated	36%
Number of deaths originating in other counties	77
Jurisdiction declined	13
Number of postmortem examinations (Mesa County)	141
Percentage of deaths having an examination	6.4%
- Complete Autopsies	141
- Partial Autopsies	00
- External Examinations	00
Toxicology performed (Mesa County)	135

Gender of those deaths investigated (2019 Total Cases)	
Males	474
Females	313
Race of those deaths investigated (2019 Total Cases)	
Caucasian	723
Hispanic	41
Native American	15
Black	03
Asian	03
Other/Unknown	02
Body Transport (2019 Total Cases)	
Coroner's Office	327
Mortuaries – from scene	46
Mortuaries – from facilities	414
Additional Information (2019 Total Cases)	
Unidentified bodies	2
Organ and Tissue referrals	108
Donated to CMU Forensic Investigation Research	2
Unclaimed bodies	2
Exhumations	0

The following information pertains only to deaths that were not transferred back to the county of origin.

Age



In the 0 to 19 years old age group, there were fourteen deaths, which included nine males and five females. Of these, three were natural deaths; 8-month-old complications of prematurity, 11-month-old was a viral infection and a 7-year-old from a seizure disorder. Five deaths were accidents; 10-month-old drowning, 1-year-old thermal injuries, 1-year-old acute alcohol intoxication, two 19-year-old multiple blunt force injuries and 19-year-old MDMA intoxication. Three were suicides; 12-year-old gunshot wound of head, 17-year-old hanging and 19-year-old hanging. One was a homicide; 9-year-old chloroform poisoning. One was undetermined; 2-year-old without a clear cause or manner of death.

Manner of Death

Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	515	24	5%
Accident	135	59	44%
Suicide	47	46	98%
Homicide	9	9	100%
Undetermined	4	4	100%

** In the 76 accidental deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, all were decedents who were hospitalized for an extended period of time and the injuries

were well documented in the hospital and/or care facility. Of these 76 deaths; 63 deaths were from complications of a fall from standing height or a low height such as bed. Six accidental deaths were from motor vehicle crashes. Three accidental deaths were from drug intoxication. One accidental death was the result of thermal injuries. Two accidental death was from aspirating food. One accidental death was from ingesting a laundry detergent (he was almost completely blind and did not realize it was laundry detergent when he ingested it and was in the hospital for days after the event). The suicide had been in the hospital for an extended period of time from the initial incident.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) crash	21
Falls	67
Drug intoxication	33
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	1
Drowning	4
Thermal injuries	4
Other **	6

**The “other” cases include: two electrocutions, two food aspiration, one laundry detergent ingestion, one weather and exhaustion from hiking in mud and one bicycle crash.

The 21 motor vehicle crash-related deaths displayed the following data:

- Drivers – 18 (One was a driver that drove into a ditch and drowned)
 - Snowmobile – 1
 - Motorcycle/ATV - 5
- Passengers – 3
- Motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 4
- Motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 2
- Motorcycle/ATV unknown if wearing a helmet – 0
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 4
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 6
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 5
- Alcohol and/or drugs involved in 8 of the driver’s deaths (38% of cases)
 - Alcohol (absent of drugs) in 3 deaths
 - Drugs (absent of alcohol) in 1 deaths
 - Combination of both alcohol and drugs in 4 deaths
 - Unknown if alcohol and/or drugs involved in 2 deaths due to hospitalization for extended time

The drownings consisted of:

- 1 Creek (Positive for drugs and alcohol)
- 1 Mud puddle (Infant)
- 1 Hot tub (Positive for drugs and alcohol)
- 1 Bath tub (Negative toxicology)

The drugs consisted of:

- 13 were mixed drug intoxications
 - Oxycodone and amphetamine
 - Oxycodone, cyclobenzaprine, gabapentin and diphenhydramine alcohol and methamphetamine
 - Oxycodone, acetaminophen, venlafaxine and quetiapine
 - Tramadol and hydrocodone (2)
 - Heroin and fentanyl
 - Fentanyl and hydrocodone
 - Fentanyl, acetylfentanyl and heroin
 - Hydroxyzine, oxycodone, fluoxetine, venlafaxine and cetirizine
 - Trazodone and alcohol
 - Heroin, methadone and methamphetamine
 - Oxycodone, gabapentin and chlorphiramine
 - Opiates and alcohol
- 20 were from a single drug
 - 9 methamphetamine
 - 3 alcohol
 - 2 fluoxetine
 - 1 tramadol
 - 1 diphenhydramine
 - 1 oxycodone
 - 1 MDMA (ecstasy)
 - 1 heroin
 - 1 methadone
- 10 deaths had drugs or alcohol as a contributing factor in the death

Homicides

The 9 homicides had the following characteristics:

- 1 death due to chloroform poisoning
- 2 deaths to stab wounds
- 6 deaths due to gunshot wounds

Natural deaths

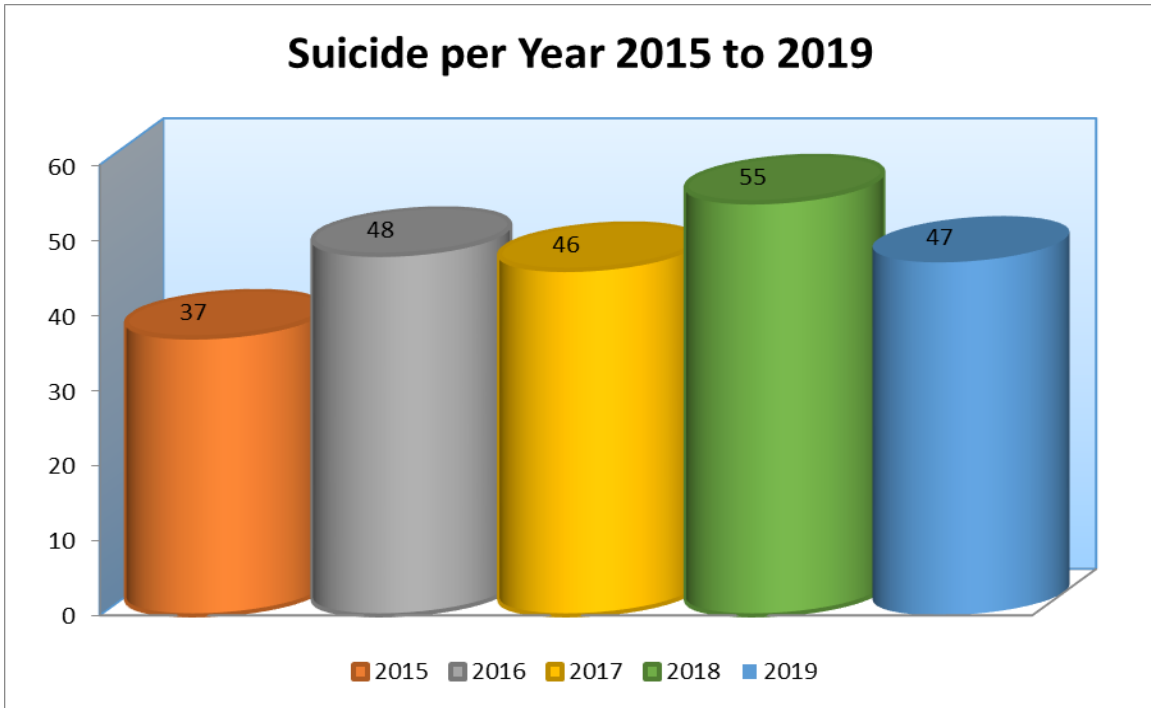
Of the 515 natural deaths investigated, the majority of the deaths were cardiovascular related (340 deaths, 66%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes, and aneurysms. There were 20 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 30 cancer related deaths, 29 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 28 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism. The remaining 68 deaths were primarily from complications of other long-standing disease processes.

Undetermined

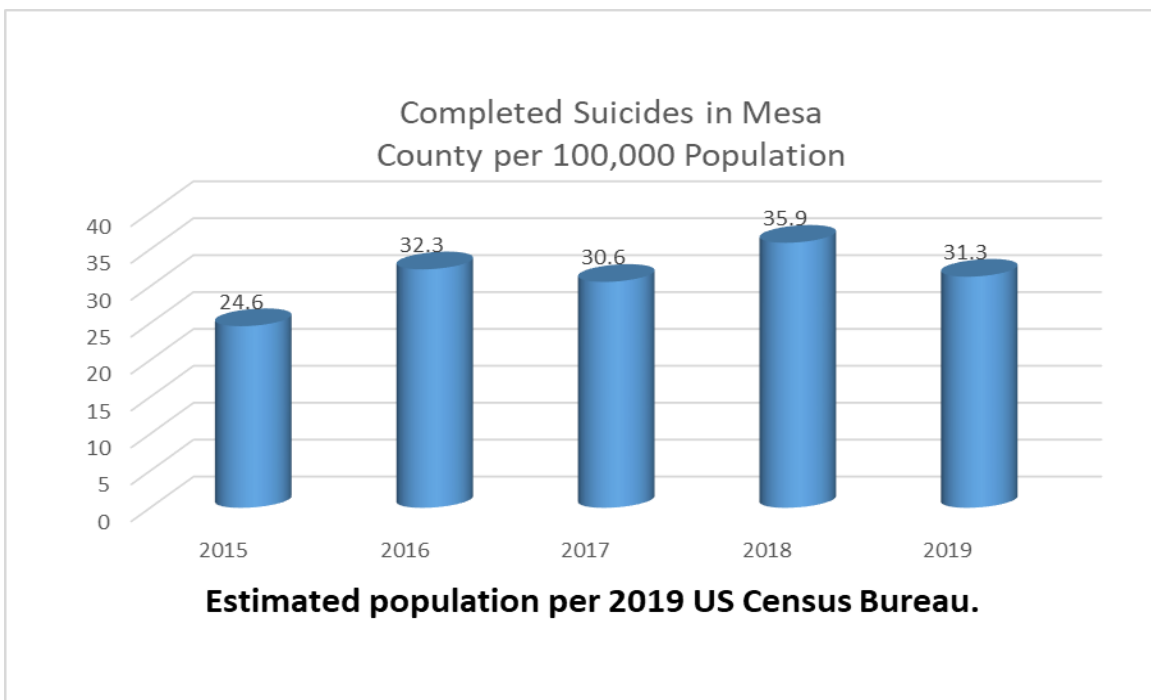
There were four undetermined deaths. Two deaths were from skeletal remains. One undetermined death was because there was not clear evidence to determine the cause and manner. The last undetermined death was because it was unclear at the time of autopsy if the bleed was spontaneous or traumatic from a fall.

Suicides

OVERVIEW



Suicides rates are often expressed in number of suicides per 100,000 people.



There were 47 suicides in 2019. 42 of the 47 suicides were male; whereas, 5 suicides were female. Twenty-five suicides were from gunshot wounds. Thirteen suicides were hangings. Four suicides were from drug intoxications. Two suicides were multiple blunt force injuries. One suicide was drowning. One suicide was sharp force injuries. One suicide was a result of nitrogen poisoning.

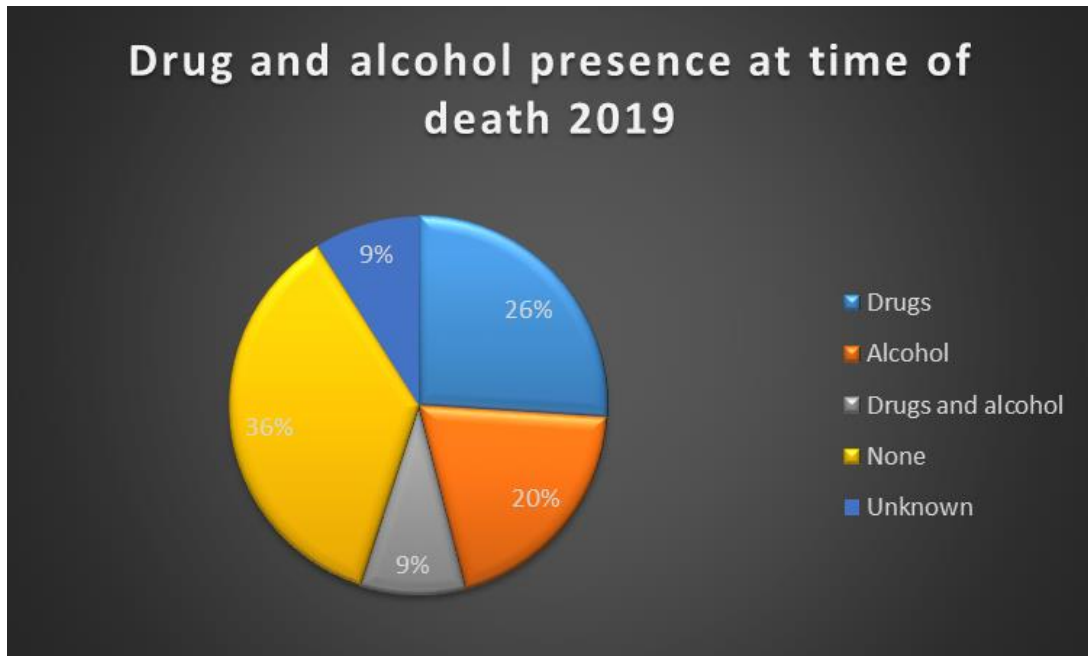
- Males age range was 17 to 88 years-old
 - 22 gunshot wound
 - 13 hanging
 - 2 drug intoxication
 - 2 multiple blunt force injuries
 - 1 drowning
 - 1 sharp force injuries
 - 1 nitrogen poisoning
- Females age range was 12 to 76 years-old
 - 3 gunshot wound
 - 2 drug intoxication

SUICIDE AND AGE

The following table displays suicide by age range and method.

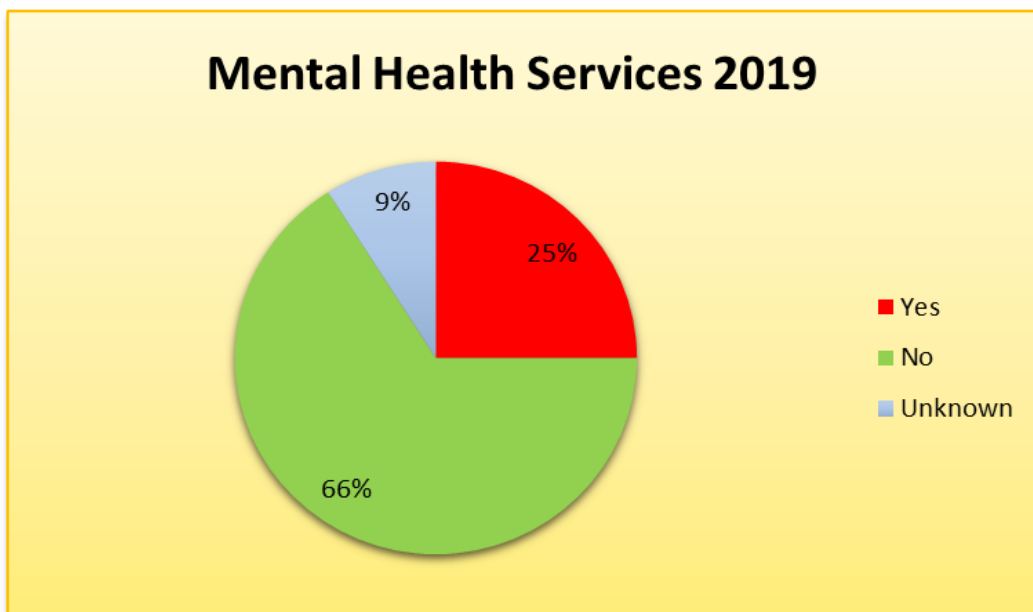
Suicide by Age Range and Method 2018							
Age Range	Drug Intoxication	Gunshot Wound	Hanging	Nitrogen/Drowning	Multiple Blunt Force Injuries	Sharp force injuries	Total
0 to 9							0
10 to 19		1	2				3
20 to 29		2	3		1		6
30 to 39		4	4				8
40 to 49		5	3		1		9
50 to 59	2	8	1	1			12
60 to 69	1	1				1	3
70 to 79	1	2		1			4
80 Plus		2					2

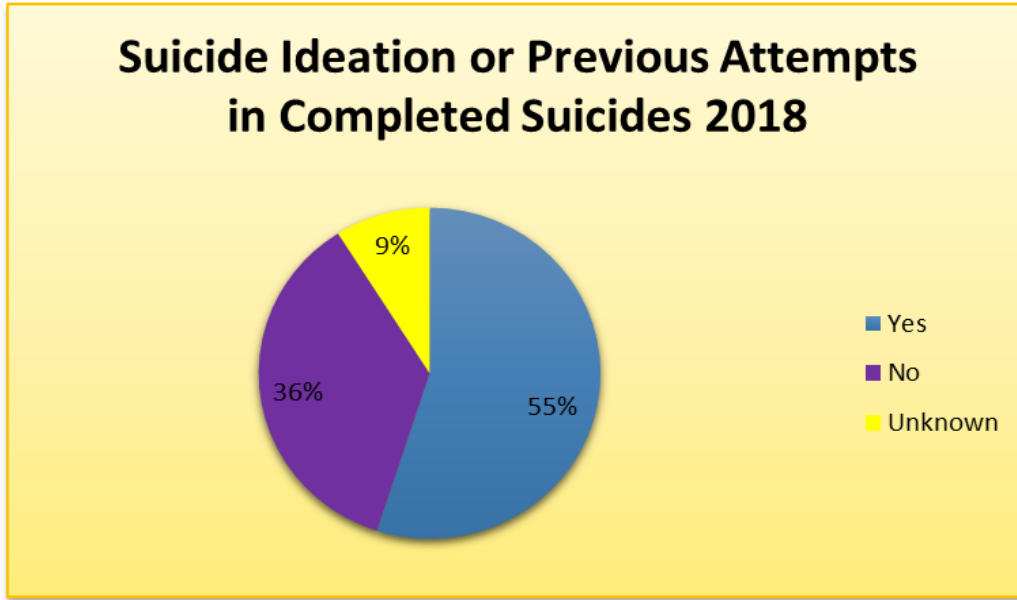
TOXICOLOGY



MENTAL HEALTH AND TREATMENT

Families and friends of many of the suicide victims expressed that the decedents were depressed prior to the decedent's death.





SUICIDES TRENDS

The table below shows the number of suicides by month from 2015 to 2019.

Completed Suicides per Year 2015 to 2019 by Month					
Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
January	6	4	4	6	5
February	1	5	5	6	5
March	5	3	5	2	1
April	3	3	3	8	2
May	5	3	2	4	4
June	1	4	4	5	6
July	1	2	2	7	8
August	3	5	6	3	5
September	4	4	3	5	4
October	4	3	5	4	2
November	1	4	7	0	3
December	3	8	3	5	2
Suicides per Year	37	48	46	55	47
Suicide % of Case Load	6.5%	7.1%	7.0%	8.2%	6.0%

Links:

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Suicide Prevention Foundation: www.suicidepreventionfoundation.org

References:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mesacountycolorado/PST045217>